City of Grand Rapids
Web Content Style Guide

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Guide Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to provide internal City of Grand Rapids site content developers with tools and tips to build strong, user-friendly content. Using information from this guide, site owners can improve the structure of their content, align the presentation of their content with the broader City site, and focus their information for greatest impact to web readers. The document also includes guidelines for content style and search engine optimization.

- **Identity**: City branding allows visitors to recognize immediately a web page's affiliation with the City of Grand Rapids
- **Usability**: Sites must be made usable (quick and easy to use, navigate and understand) for the widest audience
- **Consistency**: This guide promotes consistency. Consistency simplifies navigation of pages for end users of the City's web pages. The City is committed to maintaining a high level of consistency across web pages in different areas of the City's website.
- **Accuracy**: Pages must be accurate and up-to-date.

Audience

This web style guide is organized in sections that apply to various roles in the website creation/ management process. These roles may or may not overlap in a given individual's responsibilities.

Scope

Any web document that represents the City of Grand Rapids or its official units, programs or departments must follow this web style guide.

What's Inside

A-Z Directory	Alphabetical guide to content formatting
Design Values	Our model and values for website design and customer interactions
Writing Content	Best practices for writing content for the web and site users
Forms	Best practices for creating forms
Logo	Guide to logo usage
Photography	Selecting quality photographs for consistent promotion on the web
Data Visualization	Best practices for developing and displaying statistical data, graphs and charts
Creating Website Content (Templates)	Short descriptions of OpenCities templates with links to ZenDesk

A-Z Directory

Abbreviations and Acronyms

You may use abbreviations that are common in Standard English, such as site names (e.g., St. Louis), or names of states (use postal abbreviations, e.g. "CA" for California).

Avoid using non-standard or UCR-specific abbreviations.

Refer to any abbreviations and acronyms by its initials and use acronym Markdown so the full explanation is available as hover text. Don't use full stops in abbreviations: MDOC, not M.D.O.C.

Don't use an acronym if you're not going to use it again later in the text.

Active Voice

Use the active rather than passive voice. This will help us write concise, clear content.

Addresses

- Use plus-4 zip code when possible.
- In running text, spell out *North, South, East, West* before the street name; *Street, Avenue, Road, Drive, Boulevard,* and the like.
- Use figures for numbered addresses
- Abbreviate Ave, Blvd, and St and directional cues (NE, NW, SE, SW) when used with a numbered address. Spell out other words such as alley, drive and road.
- If the street name or directional cue is used without a numbered address, it should be capitalized and spelled out (*Union Avenue Northeast*).
- If a street name is a number, spell out First through Ninth and use figures for 10th and higher.
- State names should be spelled out in running text but may be shown as postal abbreviations in bibliographies, lists, and mailing addresses.
- City of Grand Rapids addresses generally follow this order:

    City of Grand Rapids
    Department Name
    Building Name, Room Number
    300 Monroe Ave. NW
    Grand Rapids, MI 49503-1724

Addressing the user

Address the user as 'you' where possible. Content on site often makes a direct appeal to citizens and businesses to get involved or take action: 'You can contact HMRC by phone and email' or 'Pay your car tax', for example.

Ages

Don't use hyphens in ages unless to avoid confusion, although it's always best to write in a way that avoids ambiguity. For example, 'a class of 15 16-year-old students took the advanced course' can be written as '15 students aged 16 took the advanced course'.

Ampersand

Use 'and' rather than '&', unless it's a department's logo image or a company's name.

Bold

Don't use bold. It can distract the user and it makes the text longer and more confusing for users of screen readers. Use headings or bullets instead if you want to emphasize particular words or sections.

Brackets

Use (round brackets), not [square brackets]. The only acceptable use of square brackets is for explanatory notes in reported speech:

"Thank you [Mayor] Ms. Bliss"

Don't use round brackets to refer to something that could either be singular or plural, like 'Check which document(s) you need to send to the Planning Commission.'

Always use the plural instead, as this will cover each possibility: 'Check which documents you need to send to the Planning Commission.'

Bulleted Lists

These should be used whenever you are listing a large number of items, particularly if the items are links. You can use bullet points to make text easier to read.

Here are the rules for creating a bulleted list:

- Bullet lists should be introduced with a sentence which is closed with a colon
- The first word in a bulleted item is always capitalized
- The punctuation on the bulleted list depends upon the nature of the text. Complete sentences, or phrases that would complete a sentence when combined with the introduction, receive a period.
  - There may be multiple periods in a bulleted item
  - Phrases that are not complete sentences or are part of a list do not require a period
  - Don't put 'or' or 'and' after the bullets
  - If you add links they appear within the text and not as the whole bullet

Use numbered steps instead of bullet points to guide a user through a process. You don't need a lead-in line and you can use links and downloads in steps. Steps end in a period because each should be a complete sentence

Captions

Use a caption if there's a person, place, or situation that the reader is likely to want to identify.

- Use *(left), (from left),* or the like if there might be confusion about who's who in a photo.
- Captions should be placed to clearly and visibly associate them with their images.
- When captions are grouped instead of appearing by their respective images, start with *clockwise from top, from left,* or the like, or use *top left, bottom,* or the like for each image.
- Do not use a middle initial if the full name with initial is already in the story.
- Do not use periods in captions that are not sentences, except to be consistent with other captions in the same spread or publication.
- Do not include the obvious (e.g., The group is standing by the copy machine).

Change Notes

When you edit or change a document, write what's changed in the 'Change Note' field - this is publicly viewable. Change notes should only include factual changes that specifically affect the user in the task which they're trying to perform.

Change notes will trigger an email alert to users who are subscribed to the sub-topic the publication is tagged to.

Use change notes to tell users:

- what has changed
- who is affected
- any agencies, departments or organizations that are responsible for the change

Don't use changes notes for telling users about minor editorial corrections or layout issues

How to Write a Change Note

Focus on why the page has been changed. Concentrate on any new actions that the user may have to perform. This includes any penalties or charges they need to be aware of when performing a task. Don't include date of change to document as that will automatically change.

Try to avoid phrases like 'This page has been updated to include…'. Enter something short but useful, make it a clear statement of what's happened. For example:

> 'New stipulations for the Pilot Mobile Food Business ordinance have been added to the site.'

If the change on the page is sign-posting an upcoming issue, the change note should also reflect that. For example:

> 'Starting January 1, 2017, Mobile Food Businesses will require a valid annual business license to expire on June 30 of every year.'

Once the change has happened, the new change note should read similar to:

> 'Mobile Food Businesses require a valid annual business license to expire on June 30 of every year'

Change notes will trigger an email alert to users who are subscribed to alerts including policy, policy areas, topic, sub topic and filtered publications.

Users can read change notes by clicking 'see all updates' and then 'full page history'.

Copyright Violations

All information, images and intellectual properties are protected by law. Even though it may be easier to directly copy from another site, do not do so unless you get written permission from the site owner.

Dates and Times

The proper format is "a.m." and "p.m.", not capitalized and with periods. Days of the week and months of the year should be spelled out. 12 noon and 12 midnight should be noted as such, not 12 a.m. or 12 p.m.

Disabilities

- *People with disabilities*, not *the disabled* or *disabled people*.
- Avoid words like *victim*, *afflicted* and *stricken.*
- Do not use *normal* to mean the opposite of having a disability.

email

- Do no hyphenate *email*; lowercase it except at the start of a sentence.
- An email address that does not fit on one line should be broken before an at sign or a period. Do not introduce hyphenation when breaking it.

Headlines

They should be up style. E.g. City of Grand Rapids Revamps Website. Capitalization of all words, except for internal articles, prepositions, conjunctions and forms of to be (e.g. "is"). In general, when using the content management system, any headers H1 through H3 should be in up-style. H4 and below should be in down style. *Section Headlines* should be no more than five to seven words and should not be in title case (capitalized). Headlines should be compelling, simple and straightforward. Get to the point and state facts. Do not fall into the trap of trying to be clever.

Keywords

The phrases and underlined keywords are themes that our research shows our core audiences believe important. These themes should influence the content as applicable.

Customers – Users (add transformation value stream themes):

- Opportunity for everyone
- Access to excellent service delivery
- Dynamic event — "where it's happening" intellectually, culturally, socially

- Supportive of everyone in our community
- Open to new ideas, perspectives, experiences (from internships to fun), people, and partners
- Making a difference — locally and globally
- Future-focused
- A community that attracts and cultivates excellence
- High impact — dedicated to discovery and knowledge that make a difference
- Empowering educators by providing support and resources
- Innovative — focused on the future
- Transformative — Shaping the future of our community, our region, and our world
    - Economic transformation
    - Environmental transformation
    - Social transformation
    - Governance transformation
- Dynamic and engaging learning environment - "where it's happening" intellectually, culturally, socially
- Supportive/proud of and connected to alumni
- Commitment to lifelong learning and relationship
- Welcoming and accessible
- Open to new ideas, perspectives, people, and partners
- Making a difference — locally and globally
- Future-focused

Letter Case

Only use upper case when referring to the name of an entity, program or trademarked name. Don't use block capitals for large amounts of text as it is difficult to read.

Lower case is preferable but use capitalization for:

- departments (specific government departments)
- the Civil Service Board, with lower case for 'the'
- job titles, managers' role titles: Minister for Housing, Home Secretary
- titles like Mr., Mrs., Dr., the Mayor of Grand Rapids (the mayor at second mention)

- buildings
- place names
- brand names
- faculties, departments, institutes and schools
- names of groups, boards, commissions and organizations: Housing Commission
- titles of specific acts or bills: Housing Reform Bill (but use ‘the act’ or ‘the bill’ after the first time you use the full act or bill title)
- names of specific, named government schemes known to people outside government: Right to Work
- header cells in tables: Annual Profits
- titles of publications (and within single quotes)
- World War 1 and World War 2 (note caps and numbers)

Don’t capitalize:

- government - never Government, even when referring to an elected administration, (so not the American Government) unless part of a specific name, like Local Government Association
- white paper, green paper, command paper
- budget, unless referring to and using the full name of a specific statement - for example, “2016 Budget”
- sections or schedules within specific named acts, regulations or orders
- departmental board, executive board, the board
- policy themes like sustainable communities, promoting economic growth, local enterprise zones
- the military

Line Breaks

- Do not break a proper name or a hyphenated word except at the hyphen
- Do not end a column at a hyphen – leave up and bring down at least three characters of a hyphenated word
- Allow only two consecutive lines to end in a hyphen
- Do not allow a single partial word in the last line of a paragraph
- When a URL cannot fit on one line, the break should come before a period, single slash, or other punctuation mark. Similarly, the break should come before a period or @ when an email address cannot fit on one line. Hyphenation should not be introduced into a URL or email address

Links

Using links to additional information related to your content provides the user with the information that they need without having it all on one page. Linked content should be *descriptive* (educating the reader about the information they are pursuing) and *active* (using words like read, explore, learn, find).

Weak: For more information about the event, click here. (Include information about the link's destination. Click is a verb, but isn't related to the content on the destination page.)

Strong: Learn more about the 2017 Neighborhood Summit

Stronger: View photos from the 2017 Neighborhood Summit on Facebook

Lists

- Do not use a colon after a verb or a preposition introducing a list ("including Ben, Julie and Pete" instead of "including: Ben, Julie and Pete") unless the introductory phrase contains some variation of *the following* or *as follows.*
- Maintain parallel construction in listed items.
- Avoid numbering unless there will be a reference to the numbers in later text.
- If you must number a list in running text, place numbers (without periods) in parentheses.
- In vertical lists, use a period after each item if one or more is a complete sentence. In that case, the first words should be capitalized. Otherwise, capitalization of the first words depends on the context.
- Alphabetize or put listed items in some other logical order.

Nonsexist Language

- Use whenever possible (chair, chairperson, police officer, etc.).
- Although *chairman of the board* may be used, *board chair* is preferable.
- One way to get around the *his or her* dilemma is to recast in the plural (*they, their, them*).

Numbered List

1. Use numbers followed by a period (e.g. '1.')
2. Make sure there is one space after the period
3. You need one empty line space before the numbers start, and one at the end
4. Sub-items need an indent of 2 spaces

Numbers

In keeping with Associated Press style guide, numbers lower than 10 should be spelled out. All two-digit or greater numbers should be presented numerically. However, if a number starts a sentence, write it out in full (Thirty-four, for example), except where it starts a title or subheading. Spell out “first” to “ninth”. After that use “10^{th}”, “11^{th}” and so on. In tables, use numerals throughout.

- For numbers over 999, insert a comma for clarity: 1,000
- Spell out common fractions like “one-half”
- Use a % sign for percentages
- Use a 0 where there’s no digit before the decimal point
- Use ‘500 to 900’, not ‘500-900’ (except in tables)
- Use MB for anything over 1MB: 4MB not 4096KB.
- Use KB for anything under 1MB: 569KB not 0.55MB.
- Keep it as accurate as possible and up to 2 decimal places: 4.03MB.
- Addresses: use ‘to’ in address ranges: 49 to 53 Cherry Street.

Quotes and Speech Marks

In long passages of speech, open quotes for every new paragraph, but close quotes only at the end of the final paragraph.

- Single quotes are to be used in headlines, for unusual terms and when referring to words or publications (i.e. *Download the publication ‘City of Grand Rapids Master Plan’*)
- Double quotes are to be used in body text for direct quotations (i.e. *According to Mayor Bliss, “Over 400 people are expected to attend”*)
- Block quotes are to be used for quotes longer than a few sentences

References

References should be easy to understand by anyone, not just specialists.

When writing a reference:

- don’t use italics
- use single quote marks around titles
- write out abbreviations in full: page not p, Nutrition Journal not Nutr J.
- use plain English, for example use ‘and others’ not ‘et al’
- don’t use full stops after initials or at the end of the reference

If the reference is available online, make the title a link and include the date you accessed the online version:

Corallo AN and others. [‘A systematic review of medical practice variation in OECD countries’] Health Policy 2014: volume 114, pages 5-14 (viewed on 18 November 2014)

Sentence Spacing

Use one space after a period.

Sentence Length

Don’t use long sentences. Check sentences with more than 25 words to see if you can split them to make them clearer.

People with moderate learning disabilities can understand sentences of 5 to 8 words without difficulty. By using common words we can help all users understand sentences of around 25 words.

Sign-in or Log-in

Use sign-in rather than log-in (verb) for calls-to-action where users enter their details to access a service.

Don’t use log-in as a noun - say what the user actually needs to enter (like username, password)

States

- States should not be abbreviated. Exceptions may be made when states appear with city names in class notes, tabular material, and mailing addresses (use postal codes then).
- Not required for Grand Rapids and major cities widely associated with a state. These include Atlanta, Baltimore, Berkeley, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, El Paso, Fort Worth, Honolulu, Houston, Indianapolis, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Louisville, Memphis, Miami, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Nashville, New Orleans, New York, Oklahoma City, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, Salt Lake City, San Antonio, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, St. Louis, and Tucson. If there is a major city of the same name in another state, however, include the state name.
- Use with smaller and lesser-known cities.
- Use commas before and after state names when they appear with cities (Wilmette, Illinois, is north of Evanston—not Wilmette, Illinois is north of Evanston).
- If a high school bears the name of its city, insert the state in parentheses: Downers Grove (Illinois) High School.
- A similar rule applies to newspapers, but italicize the state within an italicized newspaper name: *Aurora (Illinois) Beacon News.*

Symbols

- In running text, spell out the words percent, degrees (temperature), feet, inches, and cents. In tables, it is acceptable to use symbols for these (%, ?, ', ", ?).

- Amounts greater than 99 cents should be in numerals with a dollar sign ($4).

Telephone Numbers

- In running text, use a hyphen between area code and number
- An exception may be made for phone numbers in business cards, stationery and the like

Times

- Do not use :00 with a time unless it's a very formal publication in which it would be appropriate—for instance, invitations.
- Lowercase a.m. and p.m.
- It is sometimes permissible to remove the periods in a.m. and p.m. in tables and lists if space is tight, but use the periods in running text.
- Noon, not 12 p.m. or 12 noon.
- Do not use a dash in place of to in a range of times introduced by from (from 5 to 7 p.m., not from 5–7 p.m.).
- Do not use o'clock unless it's in quoted material or formal contexts such as invitations.

Titles (Legal Citations)

- Italicize and use *v.* for "versus" *(Brown v. Board of Education).*

Titles (Organizations, Companies, Institutions)

- Names of associations, organizations, conferences, meetings, etc., follow the same guidelines as for compositions, except that the article *the* preceding a name is lowercased even when it is part of the formal title and the organization capitalizes it. Use the group's punctuation and acronym for its name.
- Use *Co.* when a business uses the word as part of its formal name. *Inc., Corp.,* and *Ltd.* are usually not needed but when used after the name of a corporate entity should be abbreviated.
- Such words as *club, team,* and *conference* are lowercased when used alone. The exception to this is *University* when referring to Northwestern. (New members of the John Evans Club attended the event. The club is a recognition society for donors to the University.)

Titles (People)

- Uppercase preceding a name if it’s a title by which the person may be called (Mayor Bliss), but lowercase a functional title (program manager Becky Jo Glover). Plurals are lowercased (department directors Kara Wood, Connie Bohatch and Tom Almonte).

- Capitalize endowed professorships whether before or after a name. Do not use the before endowed professorships, because in some cases (i.e., Walter P. Murphy Professor, Charles Deering McCormick Professor of Teaching Excellence) there is more than one person with the same title.

Titles (Publications and Creative Works)

- Titles of books, periodicals (including online magazines), movies, television series, plays, works of art, musical compositions (except those with generic titles, e.g., Symphony no. 5 in C Minor), collections of poetry, and long poems published separately are italicized.
- Titles of lectures, speeches, episodes of television and radio series, songs, poems, articles from newspapers and periodicals, chapters, short stories, essays, and individual parts of books are in roman type and within quotation marks.
- Lowercase articles (a, an, the), coordinate conjunctions (and, or, for, nor), prepositions regardless of length, and to in infinitives. Capitalize everything else, including those parts of speech if they appear as the first or last word in a title (On the Waterfront).

The Web and email

- Do not hyphenate email; lowercase it except at the start of a sentence. Merriam-Webster’s now allows email to be used as a verb, going the way of fax, another noun that common usage turned into a verb.
- Do not hyphenate online.
- World Wide Web is not needed; web is sufficient.
- http:// is not needed at the start of a web address unless the address doesn’t start with www. or there might be some confusion about whether it is a web address.
- www. is not required in contexts where it is clear that it is a web address, but be consistent in using it or not within a publication.
- < > is not needed around a web address.
- Capitalize Internet but lowercase web.
- Use home page as two words but website as one word.

- Use database as one word.
- Italicize the titles of online publications (HotWired) and blogs.
- If an address does not fit on one line, do not introduce hyphenation when breaking it. For instance, do not hyphenate northwestern in a web or an email address; readers might think the hyphen is part of the address. An unavoidable line break should come before a punctuation mark within a URL.
- Close up webcast, webcasting, and webcam, but leave a space in web camera.

Typographic Alignment

Don't use justified spacing for standard (e.g. legislative) documents that will be presented on the website. In most cases, left-alignment is preferred.

Underlining

Never underline. Some implementations of the website will add underlines to links automatically but underlining should never be used to emphasize text. **Use bold text instead.**

Web, Webpage, Website

Website is one word. No capitalization is needed.

We like our new *website*. It is full of great *webpages*. We sincerely hope Grand Rapids residents find it a great resource for local information on the *web*.

Design Values

Iterative - Move beyond the distinct phases of planning, building and maintaining to create ongoing feedback loops that ensure continuous improvement.

User-centered - By starting with an understanding of who they are serving, government is better able to provide convenient and effective access to public services and information that's tailored to resident's needs and abilities.

Data-driven - Analytics and data-informed performance management can help drive insights into opportunities to improve efficiency and responsiveness. When governments make data open and accessible, organizations companies, and individuals can use the data in meaningful ways.

Digital Service Process

The Web Team has created a generalizable process for transforming paper processes into improved digital services.

- **Analyze & Prioritize** digital services based on criteria of resident need, City need, volume, and technical difficulty.
- **Cultivate** safe space for experimentation with key internal stakeholders {i.e. Management, SME, front-line staff).
- **Identify** user need and story. For example, a user story exposes flaw in E-Z pay
- **Map** the current interaction to capture challenges and potential solutions. Re-assess viability.
- **Redesign the Interaction** if there is a point of transaction for the service, after a review of usability and effectiveness.
- **Draft content** and prototype pages to better fit the user needs Ex. Co-Creation
- **Test** with real user in the wild. Document feedback.
- **Iterate.** Capture ongoing feedback through the website for future refinement.

Analyze and Prioritize

The process of transforming paper-based services into digital services begins with an exercise in institutional self-awareness.

A City must be willing to ask and able to answer some difficult questions: What is the entirety of services currently offered by the City? Which transactions have the most volume - and through what channels? Which have the highest impact on quality of life? Which interactions cause the most frustration for customers? When are long response times simply the nature of the service? How do we gauge the technical viability of particular services? Which transactions would people prefer to self-serve online versus via the phone or in- person? How will we know if the process of digitizing services actually makes them better?

Most importantly, where should a City start?

The vast majority of American Cities struggle to answer such questions in any detail. However, an enterprise-wide commitment to LEAN methodology has uniquely positioned the City of Grand Rapids to understand the experience of users and its own internal processes.

This unique advantage is especially apparent in the quality of data from the City's 311program. By consolidating and advertising a “One Call to City Hall" 311 has become something like a nerve center for identifying pain points in current processes.

What makes Grand Rapids special is that the functional requirements of 311's dynamic pricing adds a duration layer to the data that enables the City to not only identify opportunities for digital services, but to quantify improvements against cost-savings.

To organize this strategic process, we formulated a Digital Services Inventory to nominate and vet services to include in the website.

We use four primary criteria to judge the desirability of services/transactions:

- **Resident Pain** (1-5 Rating) - The relative amount of cumbersome process or cost faced by the resident because of a non-digital process.
- **City Pain** (1-5 Rating) - The relative amount of cumbersome process created for City staff and/or revenue loss incurred as a result of a non-digital process.
- **Technical Feasibility** - The extent to which a digital prototype would have to integrate with existing IT systems to achieve the vision for improved experience.
- **Volume** - Use data to calculate the number of customer service events resulting from the service.

Cultivate Internal Buy-In and Digital Ownership

The unknowns of technology projects can throw the risk aversion of non-technical government employees into overdrive.

The buy in and collaboration of internal partners is critical to the success of digital service transformation.

When the knowledge and experience of department staff does not inform the design a prototype is bound to violate the business process or inadvertently create more internal work. Most importantly, co-creating prototypes is an opportunity for internal staff at all levels to grow digital skills.

How do we recruit department participants?

We use three tactics to engage prospective alpha partners.

1. We use Website Analytics. A real-time visualization of website traffic, this tool is an accessible, first-step tool for the web team to engage city staff in the experience and needs of digital visitors.
2. We frame this as an opportunity to redesign services with the potential to increase self-service online while reducing the time and cost of 311 customer service.
3. We brief the departments on the entire process, the iterative nature of this new website, and the professional development value of digital skills.

How do we work with them?

We meet 1:1 with partners to develop prototypes (content and forms). We pursue a spirit of co-creation wherever possible to help partners develop confidence in the digital services process.

How do we make decisions?

We convene a steering committee of managers from participating departments to meet periodically to collectively determine the scope and approach for the website and as the number of services on the micro-site grows, so too does the steering committee.

Rather than assume an understanding of what is required up front and risk the strong possibility of being incorrect, the steering committee is able to tweak the scope and goals for the website in an ongoing and interactive fashion.

The intent in taking this approach is to allow the core team to deliver a website that meets the actual needs of the City. This decision-making structure has also helps to derive a process for digitizing services that is sustainable and rewarding for departments.

Identify User Need

We can't assume to know what our users need. After all, people are complicated! Technology is complicated. And how people use technology changes all the time.

While users might be complicated, discovering their needs is not. Every user need begins as a hypothesis – an attempt to describe the context our users carry with them. Through user research and a close look at user behavior, we can determine if our hypothesis holds, or if we need to revise it.

When in doubt about how to start, there is one thing you can always do: customer service. Handle paper applications at the counter. Do a ride along. Take phone calls. Manually help people succeed in using your service.

With partners committed to a phase of experimentation, the first step is to hone an understanding of the user needs for a particular service.

It turns out there is already a deep understanding of user needs in City Hall. We interviewed public-facing department staff to capture anecdotal knowledge from complaints and troubleshooting requests. We listened to recordings of 311 calls made about the particular service.

User needs are typically articulated through user stories. These user stories are vignettes that describe a situation, motivation and expected outcome as seen from the perspective of the public. User stories are just statements that describe a goal, written in the first person. There is no one way to write a user story, but one effective approach is called "jobs to be done", which is shown here.

As a: [type of user]

Who is this for?

I need to: [task/action]

What will help this person reach their goal?

So that I can: [goal]

Map Current Process

Creating a better online experience for a City service requires a start-to-finish understanding of each step of the current interaction and internal process.

Understanding the lifecycle of the service is critical to surfacing opportunities for a redesigned prototype to improve the public experience and even potentially the business process itself.

The City's emphasis on Lean and A3 techniques offers great precedent for this work. Mapping the business process requires little more than the manager/SME for that City service, an outside collaborator, sticky notes, and some pens. Picking a wall, the outside collaborator asks the SME to create a sticky note for each channel the public can use to complete the service (in-person, online, 311, mail, etc.) and then create another sticky note for each step through the channels until the service is complete.

Additional sticky notes can be used to show the average time between steps, forms associated with steps, and any time either the public or city staffer must interact with an IT system.

With the sticky notes on the wall offering a visual representation of the service journey, the team can use available data and the SME's anecdotal knowledge to understand the volume of throughput and where people most often got lost in the process.

Mapping a user's journey through a service can lead to "A-ha" moments that pinpoint not only frustration points but also opportunities to streamline the form design. Web content can more proactively share information or set expectations – that leads to more satisfaction.

Prototype Transaction

Any content on a government website that helps satisfy a user need should be considered a digital service. But very often the highest impact digital services include transactions – the payments, service requests, applications, filings – which make up the core of an interaction with the City. It's when a resident can pay a parking ticket via the website that she can truly feel like she has "done City business online".

The complexity of the transaction is the primary determinant of Technical Feasibility in the Digital Services Inventory. We prioritize services where the mode of transaction is currently a paper form - or PDF. Today, PDF forms represent the vast majority of transactions that the public makes with the City of Grand Rapids.

With a shared understanding of the service interaction and all the data that is absolutely necessary to complete the internal business process, we are prepared to redesign the paper forms into streamlined, more intelligent Web Forms.

Redesign Content

Far too often the content – also known as "the words" – on government websites is complex, repetitive, and much longer than users are willing to read. If people can't understand what we're saying, how can we expect them to fill out applications correctly or provide us other info we need to help them?

Content design is the practice of shaping information to help people take action. To do so, City Website content must be direct, informative without being descriptive, and written like a human.

We recommend the following process for redesigning content:

- **Print out** all current website pages and 311 knowledge base articles relevant to the service.
- Use a highlighter to **capture the most effective content**, considering:
    - Where can content chunks be broken down?
    - Is the language too wordy, can it be simplified?
    - Are the chunks of content succinct?
    - Does each chunk of content represent one idea?
    - Is the content up to date?
- **Rewrite the content:**
    - Describe the scope and purpose of the service right up front.
    - Use the most effective highlighted content to guide through the process that will satisfy 80% of users.
    - Follow with secondary information, such as other ways to do the same thing (generally the less efficient options).
- **Edit** for tone of voice and style:
    - Plain, objective, concise language. Stay neutral and jargon-free.
    - One topic per paragraph
    - Highlight keywords: readers tend to scan text.
    - Use subheadings to break down large amounts of information
    - Use content features, e.g. call outs, to draw attention to a particular feature or key information point.
    - Use bulleted lists to break down
- **Review** the content:
    - Read content from the perspective of your user stories
    - Analyze content with the Hemingway App, a free online tool that reviews content and makes suggestions to improve readability.

Test with Users

The most critical part of this process is observing the intended audience for a prototype as they are actually using it. If user needs are the North Star in the digital services process, then user testing is our compass. Your prototype content and mode of transaction (i.e. form) is the first iteration of a digital service. After the team has successfully tested the prototype internally, it's time for usability testing.

Basic usability testing can be very straightforward. In a good user test, the individuals responsible for a digital service observe an individual from the service's target audience using the prototype.

The “must have” is that the participant be a member of the public that actually has a need for the service. If the participant does not have an investment in the outcome, then it is not an authentic test. Testing with real users in the wild also gives the team a chance to ensure internal staff are able to successfully process transactions generated by the prototype.

Recruiting users can be difficult, but here are some tips for recruiting testers:

- Ask department staff for known frequent fliers of a particular services.
- Catch users in the Monroe Lobby 311Customer Service Center.
- Compensate people's time with $15 gift cards.

Tips to Remember:

- **Don't overthink it.** The more you talk to users, the faster you will learn how to get the most out of each interaction.
- **Reward participation.** The time your users give is worth it. Be sure to compensate participants for their time.
- **Don't ask leading questions.** When interviewing someone, try not to bias their responses with affirmation or strong responses. When in doubt, just keep them talking.
- **Encourage stories and description.** When people tell stories, they'll include details that were important to them that you might never have thought to ask about.
- **Document your work.** The impact of your research is a function of how well you can share the insights you gain. Analyze your data, write a summary, and help people drill deeper into your work.

Release & Iterate

A digital service is never complete. Owners of digital services should create feedback mechanisms to monitor the performance of the interface over time.

Digital Design Workshops

Materials to prep:

- Sticky notes (at least three colors)
- Pens
- Butcher paper
- Printed copies of all current content
- Printed copies of all transaction (if PDF documents)
- Service insights/analytics information about each service (printed)
- Newspaper articles that reference the service (if any)
- Coffee and healthy snacks

Instructor pre-work

- Confirm services and participating City staff.
- Create service insights based on web analytics.
- Curate screen captures of the public using the service.
- Create script for user testing, if necessary.
- Set up six redesign stations around the room.
- Ensure each participant has access to a laptop w/ internet access.
- Recruit users for testing. Coordinate for them to come at the right time. Ask for someone to assist to you in getting them to the session.

Introduction (20 minutes)

- What's service design? Ex. "Grandma-ified" TV remote, Giraffe exercise (if not under time constraint).
- What makes a good City/gov website? How do we know if /when the website works?
- What your role in making a better website? *Takeaway:* "You will leave here having made your service better".
    - Ex. Pothole damage claim in Grand Rapids
- What are the values? Remind them to note what's working and not working for you in this process.

1. Analytics and prioritization. (15 minutes)

- Show web analytics dashboard. "How are we spending time? Theirs and yours!"
- Pass out service insights for each service. Review and define each metrics included in service insight
- Discussion: "What is becoming clear to you from these numbers?
    - Ex. People spend an *enormous amount of time* on the permit info page.
- Discussion: What's missing? Are there any other data out there that can help us understand the public's interaction with this process? (search logs, call history, research reports)

2. Create a journey map (40 minutes)

- Define the concept of a journey map.
    - Identify the parts of the service that the user finds most difficult pain points for the public and city staff.
    - Start the process from start to finish (homepage to submission). Do the online process with fresh eyes. Get it out of your head.
    - Model the “five whys” and “notice, suppose, wonder”
    - Ex. Miami Garage sale permit.
- Facilitator directives:
    - Find a partner. Explain the soup to nuts process of your service to your partner.
    - One person narrates each step, while the other documents it in orange sticky notes on butcher paper. Only move as quickly as your partner can write post-its.
    - After the process is sticky noted, discuss the following questions:
        - What’s, consistently, hardest part of this service for the user? What questions are you asked the most? (flag with pink)
        - What’s, consistently, the hardest part for staff (flag with pink)
        - Discuss: Are there life circumstances of a user’s life that would make this service more or less difficult? What percentage of users have those circumstances.
        - Discuss: How would you make it better? Information presented differently? Why do the hardest parts have to exist?
    - After ~15 minutes: “Switch”.
- Invite all participants to walk around the room and look at all post its.
- Discuss: What’s surprising? What’s common?

3. Identify user need(s). (10 minutes)

- Introduce user need mad lib. (e.g. model with Grand Rapids Pothole Damage Claim)
- Ask each participant to create 2-3 user need mad libs.
- Review with journey map partner, edit/improve.
- Direct the participant to choose
- the one that, if satisfied, will reduce the most amount of frustration or user error.

4. Transaction audit & prototype, if applicable (60 minutes)

- Present: What can we do with web forms vs. paper.Ex. Grand Rapids Pothole Damage form.
    - Specific to service, not catch-all forms.
    - Dynamic logic
    - Forced diversion, when necessary
    - Save Progress.
- Share logins and demo OpenForms tool (5 minutes)
- Direct each participant to highlight the necessary parts of the printed form and cross out the unnecessary pieces. “How do we streamline this?”

- Participants create first draft of web forms.
- Direct participants to find a partner to test the form. Do they understand it?

5. Content Audit & Redesign (45 minutes)

- Present: Why does content matter? Ex. Grand Rapids Open Water Account
- Use a highlighter to capture the most effective content, considering:
    - Where can content chunks be broken down?
    - Is the language too wordy, can it be simplified?
    - Are the chunks of content succinct?
    - Does each chunk of content represent one idea?
    - Is the content up to date?
- Using your notes, rewrite the content starting with these questions:
    - Why does the government offer this service?
    - What's the step by step process for completing the service?
    - What should the user keep in mind to get through it as easily as possible?
- Edit for tone of voice and style:
    - Plain, objective, concise language. Stay neutral and jargon-free.
    - One topic per paragraph
    - Highlight keywords: readers tend to scan text.
    - Use subheadings to break down large amounts of information
    - Content features, e.g. call outs, to draw attention to a particular feature or key information point.
    - Use bulleted lists to break down dense content.
- Finally, review the content:
    - Read content from the perspective of your user stories
    - Analyze content with the Hemingway App**,** a free online tool that reviews content and makes suggestions to improve readability.

6. User Testing (60 minutes)

- Present: What's user testing?
- Directions for user testing:
    - Ask people to talk through what they're thinking/experiencing throughout
    - Looks for pauses in action
    - Things that trigger behaviors
    - 'Work arounds' or adaptations when things aren't working
    - Body language
- Post testing. Discuss:
    - Did they break it? Where did they break it?
    - Did we get the user need, right? How would you tweak it?
    - What are the assumptions that we got wrong?
    - What would you change?

Writing Content

Content Writing Best Practices

Be concise

When writing:

- try to limit each paragraph to 1 or 2 short sentences
- be clear
- avoid complicated sentence structures
- focus on 1 idea or theme per paragraph
- break up large blocks of text with subheadings

Be consistent

Be consistent in the way you write in terms of the following (see Mighty's guidelines):

- the style
- the tone
- the level of language
- the terminology used and its explanation.

Keep it short and simple (KISS)

KISS stands for 'keep it short and simple'. This is the principle that information is more easily understood if language is kept simple.

Don't use 2 words where 1 plain word will do, and always choose the shortest appropriate words or phrases:

- don't try to cram in too much information
- stick to 1 main idea or statement per sentence, with no more than 1 or 2 supporting clauses
- cut out unnecessary words; it makes the important facts more memorable
- don't start 2 consecutive sentences with 'The', if you can avoid doing so

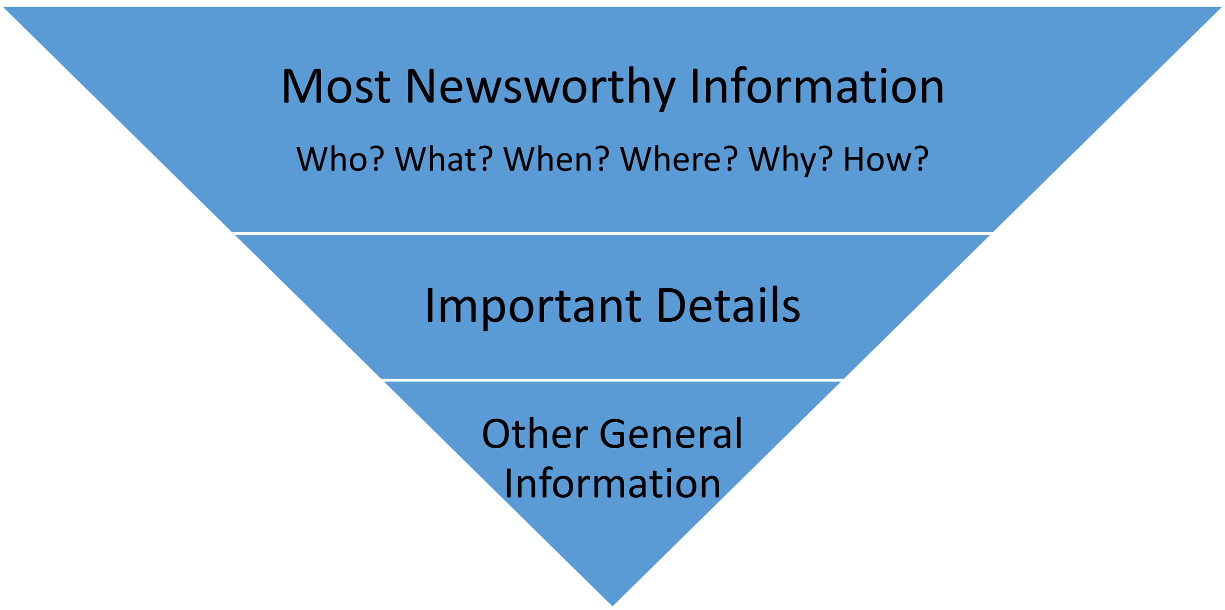
Avoid phrases such as 'in the event of', 'by virtue of the fact that', 'the question as to whether' and 'if the possibility exists'. Instead, use 'if', 'because', 'whether' and 'if possible'.

Use the active voice

Always use the active voice, not the passive. The subject performs the action: Subject>Verb>Noun

Inverted pyramid

This is the best practice style for web writing. The pyramid means placing information in order of importance. The nub of the story – who, why what, where and when – appears in the first paragraphs. This should be a conclusion of the main facts. Other facts are included in descending order of importance.



Meet the user need

Don't publish everything you can online. Publish only what someone needs to know so they can complete their task. Nothing more.

People don't usually read text unless they want information. When you write for the web, start with the same question every time: what does the user want to know?

Meeting that need means being:

- specific
- informative
- clear and to the point

Finding information on the web

An individual's process of finding and absorbing information on the web should follow these steps.

1. I have a question
2. I can find the page with the answer easily – I can see it's the right page from the search results listing
3. I have understood the information
4. I have my answer
5. I trust the information
6. I know what to do next/my fears are allayed/I don't need anything else

A website only works if people can find what they need quickly, complete their task and leave without having to think about it too much.

Good content is easy to read

Good online content is easy to read and understand.

It uses:

- short sentences
- sub-headed sections
- simple vocabulary

This helps people find what they need quickly and absorb it effortlessly.

Writing in Plain English

Plain English is clear language, with no jargon, that is understood by all readers. This isn't "dumbing down" information, but opening up information to everyone. Users don't stop understanding text because it's written clearly, but they stop understanding when it is complex.

Don't use formal or long words when easy or short ones will do. You can generally avoid this by breaking down what you are actually doing. Where technical terms can't be avoided, they should be explained in the text, not just in a footnote.

To write in plain English, think about the following:

Who's your audience?

Unless you know otherwise, think of your audience as people who take an interest in your subject but have no detailed knowledge. Use your writing to guide readers through the subject and help them identify what is most important.

The grandrapidsmi.gov audience

The grandrapidsmi.gov audience is potentially anyone living in Grand Rapids who needs information about their government, or people outside the City limits who want to do business in or travel to the city. This means government must communicate in a way that most people understand.

The best way to do this is by using common words and working with natural reading behavior.

If you're writing for a specialist audience, you still need to make sure everyone can understand what the content is about.

What are you going to say?

Think about what your readers want to know. You do not need to tell them everything. Use your opening paragraphs to:

- summarize succinctly what you're writing about
- tell readers what information they'll find
- put your research into context.

Hemingway Editor

Use the Hemingway Editor at www.hemingwayapp.com to test your content for readability. The City's standard reading level is Grade 6. To use the Hemingway Editor:

1. Simply copy the text from your word processor and paste it into the text editor
2. Click on the **Edit** view to see recommended areas of attention
3. Make corrections in the Hemingway Editor and copy and paste the corrected text back into the word processor

   OR
4. Go back to the original text in the word processor and make changes there

Using Capital Letters

Capital letters should always be used for proper nouns, at the beginning of sentences, in acronyms and in publication titles. As capital letters are more difficult to read, don't use them in any other context.

Proper nouns

Use capital letters for proper nouns, which are names that refer to a specific thing.

Examples
1991 Census
World Health Organization
Michigan Department of Corrections

Compass directions and regions

Compass directions and regions are always lower case.

Example

the south-east (direction)
the north (region)
western counties(direction)

Exceptions

East End
West End
Middle East
Central America, North America, South America

Publications

Use title case for publication titles.

Example

Psychology Today

People and jobs

Job titles should be lower case, except when attributed to a person.

Example

managing director
chief executive
Mayor Bliss

Lower case

Begin the following words and phrases with a lower case letter:

Example

the census information
section (when referring to an Act)
spring, summer, autumn, winter
local authority, health authority, unitary authority, ward

Accessibility

In order to ensure equal access to information for all people, all NU websites should be compliant with **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0**. These standards have been created as part of the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), a working group of **World Wide Web Consortium** (W3C) to ensure that web content is accessible to everyone. **Section 508 of Rehabilitation Act** outlines many of these requirements.

What can you as a content editor do to make your website accessible?

- Become familiar with **WCAG Standards**.

- Review your site using the website accessibility checklist. The list provided here is paraphrased from the W3C Web Accessibility Initiative. **See full list of WCAG 2.0 Level guidelines**.

"Must Have" Checkpoints

Following these “Must Have” checkpoints from the list will make your site W3C compliant. We recommend you follow as many “Must Have” and “Should Have” checkpoints and try to attain as many ”Good to Have” checkpoints as possible.

- Provide text equivalents to all non-text content.
  - Provide a description of all images, sound files, applets, etc. in an ALT attribute. The ALT attribute allows you to convey to all users the content and meaning of your page. For example: <img src="picture.jpg" ALT="Northwestern University Library">
  - If the image is redundant or simply decorative, mark it as “Decorative” using Cascade or give it a blank ALT tag (ALT="").
  - If your site has graphs or charts, try to summarize content to go within the Alt attribute. If necessary, provide a text description on the page itself that will also be helpful for sighted users.
  - If your page cannot contain text equivalents within it, consider creating a parallel text-only version of the page, but only as a last resort.
  - If your non-text content is dynamic, make sure that equivalents change with the non-text elements.
- Use headings and lists to organize your page and reinforce consistent page structure. This helps screen reader software to interpret the structure of the page.
  - If you are a Cascade user (or other CMS, if applicable), use WYSIWYG formatting options to style your text.
  - Use mark-up language rather than images, visual cues, fonts or sizes alone, to emphasize the structure of your page.
- Use descriptive links.
  - Instead of denoting a link with the words "Click here" or similar phrase, be descriptive when providing links; for example: link "further information from the W3C on Web accessibility" instaed of "Read more."
  - Within the content of a page it is customary to underline links. In the navigation area of a page, it is acceptable to use a clear, consistent, non-underlined link format such as a specific and distinct font, style, and size.
- Provide alternate routes to information for multimedia content:
  - Provide transcripts and captioning of audio and video.
  - Use special effects with caution and only with good reason.
  - Do not use Flash, Shockwave, or other interactive elements because special effects:
    - May not be accessible to some users.
    - May not work (or will work unpredictably) on different systems.
    - Are harder to implement and maintain.
    - Take longer to download and often require users to install plug-ins.
- Make sure that text and graphics make sense without color. People who are blind, color blind, visually impaired or who are using devices with noncolor or nonvisual displays will not receive or understand information that relies on color for its meaning.

- Choose backgrounds that contrast with page text and don't interfere with readability of content.

"Should Have" Checkpoints

The “Should Have” checkpoints will make your site accessible for most people. These checkpoints emphasize proper use of html and style tags.

- Create a site map for your site and avoid using image maps for navigation.
    - Navigation of pages using server-side image maps requires a mouse, which renders the page inaccessible to most visually impaired users. If used, consider providing a link to an alternate text version or summary.
        - Client-side image maps are accessible because the information is stored locally and can be linked to using a text reader.
- Avoid using browser detects.
    - Different content is presented to different visitors based on browser. If something doesn't work in a given browser, that element should not be used at all instead of only being presented to a segment of visitors.
- Avoid using **deprecated tags** and attributes.

"Good to Have" Checkpoints

The checkpoints under the “Good to Have” category will make your site easy to access for people with disabilities.

- Between two adjacent links, insert a printable character surrounded by spaces.
- Use of “Breadcrumbs” is recommended.
- Page content should be easy to read and understand, and free of spelling or grammatical errors.

For Coders/Developers

- Have descriptive ALT attributes on images that carry content.
- Have empty ALT attributes on images that do not carry content.
- Use tables only for tabular data. Add a brief summary of the table content for screenreader softwares.
- Allow navigation independent of JavaScript.
- Keep navigational elements in the same location on every page.

If you have further technical questions on how to use specific markup features to support accessibility, visit the **W3C online technical reports** or email the Web Accessibility Initiative at **wai@w3.org**.

Recommended

- Consult the latest **W3C guidelines**.
- Use high contrast text/background combinations with little or no pattern in background.
- Use proper heading styles to structure a page <h1>, <h2>, etc.
- Use CSS when possible.
- Use "ALT" attributes to describe images.
- Use relative font sizes.
- Make sure page is "backward compatible" (that is, that it "fails gracefully").

Strongly Discouraged (Hinder accessibility for those with visual impairments)

- Use of red/green combinations.
- Designation of headings by using "Bold" formatting.
- Making navigation or other essential information depend solely on images.

Apostrophes

Apostrophes have two functions:

- to show possession
- to show letters are missing (contractions)

Examples

It’s always a good idea to follow house style (contraction of “it is”)
Please use Sarah’s statistics (showing possession)

Possession

The apostrophe shows that someone owns something. For example, the Statistician’s Office is the office owned by the Statistician. Depending on who is doing the owning, the apostrophe is used differently.

If the possessor is singular, use an apostrophe followed by “s”.

Example

The report’s contents (contents belonging to the report)
The statistician’s opinion (opinion belonging to the statistician)

If the possessor is singular and ends in s, use an apostrophe followed by “s”.

Example

James’s driving test
ONS’s web standards

If the possessor is plural and doesn’t end in s, use an apostrophe followed by “s”.

Example

The women’s average salary
The department’s staff

If the possessor is plural and ends in s, use an apostrophe after “s”.

Example

The statistics’ source
The statisticians’ discussion

Commas

There are 3 situations in which to use the comma.

A list

Use a comma to separate 3 or more items in a list.

EXAMPLE

For breakfast there are sausages, bacon, beans and tomato available.

The comma before "and" is usually removed. However, if the last two items in the list could merge together, it is better to separate them with a serial comma to avoid confusion. This is the only time it should be used.

EXAMPLE

My favorite ice cream flavors are strawberry, chocolate, banana, and toffee.

This shows that banana is a separate flavor to toffee, so people don't think it is "banana and toffee".

To separate introductory parts

Use a comma to separate the introductory part of a sentence from the main part.

EXAMPLE

Despite his misgivings, the scientist felt the experiment went well.

Use a comma if the introductory part of the sentence changes the meaning.

EXAMPLE

Sadly, the numbers showed he had lost the election.

Use a comma if the introductory part of the sentence can merge into the sentence itself.

EXAMPLE

Inside, his heart was beating fast

NOT

Inside his heart was beating fast

The comma can be left out if the introductory part of the sentence is very short and doesn't merge.

EXAMPLE

Soon the statistics will be on the website.

To separate asides in a sentence

Use a comma to separate anything that is not vital to understanding the meaning of the sentence. There should be a comma at the beginning of the aside and at the end.

EXAMPLE

The monthly statistics, provided by GR 311, were always informative.

Contractions

The apostrophe here is used to show where letters are missing in a word. For example: do not › don't

Contractions should be used. Avoid using 'should've', 'could've', 'would've' though, as these are hard to read.

The most common contractions are:

Word	**Contraction**
Are not	Aren't
Cannot	Can't
Could not	Couldn't
Did not	Didn't
Does not	Doesn't
Do not	Don't
Had not	Hadn't
Have not	Haven't
He had/would	He'd
He will/shall	He'll
He is/has	He's
I had/would	I'd
I will/shall	I'll
I am	I'm
I have	I've
Is not	Isn't
It is/has	It's
Must not	Mustn't

Word	Contraction
Shall not	Shan’t
She had/would	She’d
She will/shall	She’ll
She is/has	She’s
Should not	Shouldn’t
That is/has	That’s
There is/has	There’s
They had/would	They’d
They will/shall	They’ll
They are	They’re
They have	They’ve
We had/would	We’d
We are	We’re
We have	We’ve
Were not	Weren’t
What will/shall	What’ll
What are	What’re
What is/has	What’s
What have	What’ve
Where is/has	Where’s
Who had/would	Who’d
Who will/shall	Who’ll
Who are	Who’re
Who is/has	Who’s
Will not	Won’t
Would not	Wouldn’t
You had/would	You’d

Word	Contraction
You will/shall	You'll
You are	You're
You have	You've

Colons

Use a colon to introduce an idea, list or quotation. The clause before the colon must be a full sentence. If not, don't use a colon.

An idea

Use the colon to introduce an idea that's an explanation or continuation of the one before the colon.

Start the explanation or continuation with a capital letter if it's a formal quote that's a full sentence, or more than one sentence.

EXAMPLE

There is one thing you need to know about statistics: they are fascinating.

EXAMPLES

There is one thing you need to know about statistics: They are fascinating and I don't know why anyone would think differently. Truly they have made my life better.

There is one thing you need to know about statistics: "A better thing has never been created," said the Chief Statistician.

A list

Use a colon to introduce a list.

EXAMPLE

The statistics incorporate varied data: housing, schooling and population information.

NOT

The statistics incorporate: housing, schooling and population information.

A quotation

Use a colon to introduce a quotation. The quotation should begin with a capital letter.

EXAMPLE

The judge stated: "You have suffered."

Dashes and Hyphens

En-dash

Automatically created in Word when you type "something – something" (*word-space-hyphen-space-word*) An en-dash is about as wide as an N and looks like this: –

Examples

Joins numbers in a range, such as "1993–99" or "1200–1400 B.C." or "pages 32–37" or open-ended ranges, like "1934–".

Joins words that describe a range, like "July–October 2010".

Em –dash

Automatically created in Word when you type "something–something" (word-hyphen-hyphen-word). An em-dash is about as wide as an M and looks like this: —

Examples

Works better than commas to set apart a unique idea from the main clause of a sentence:

"Sometimes writing for the website—rather than for art or pleasure—is really quite enjoyable."

Separates an inserted thought or clause from the main clause, such as:

"Computers make everyday punctuation—for reasons that we'll discuss later— more precise."

Shows when dialogue has been interrupted:

"Yesterday at the training—" "The WCMS training?"

Hyphen

A hyphen separates letters or numbers in compound words or grouped numbers and looks like this: -

Examples

Indicates breaks within words that wrap at the end of a line.

Connects compounded words like "mass-produced"

Connects grouped numbers, like a phone number 555-860-5086 (but not used for a range of numbers, like a date range).

Search Engine Optimization

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the process of making a web page show on a search engine's results (e.g., Google, Bing and Yahoo). When you search using a search engine, the better optimized the page, the higher up it shows on the list of results. This works for searches within a website, and using a search engine. The 3 most important sections are the keywords, metadata description and titles.

Keywords

These are words or phrases which are relevant to the content. Search engines use these to rank the contents of a page. Check if your website has a synonym list, as this will show words which are related and linked together automatically, such as “GDP” and “gross domestic product”. These words shouldn’t be added in separately.

When writing keywords:

- use a maximum of 5 keywords (too many will push the content further down search results)
- make sure each word or phrase is no more than 30 characters long (including spaces)
- include relevant words or phrases that are in your content
- make sure keywords are specific and unique
- research what search terms people use when looking for your content (sites such as [Google Trends]() are useful here)
- if you are using acronyms, include the acronym and the full name
- check if your website has a synonym list before adding keywords
- add the most important keywords into the title and URL of the release, and then any secondary keywords into the first paragraph
- use lower case

Keywords shouldn’t:

- repeat any words that are in the title of your content
- include the singular and plural of a word, such as “property” and “properties”
- include separate terms from phrases, such as “equality training” and “diversity training” when referring to “equality and diversity training”

Metadata Descriptions

The metadata description is the summary of the release content. It is mainly used for search purposes and should be searchable. This can make up the text that appears in search results. Users should be able to immediately understand what the link contains.

The description should:

- be an accurate, concise and clear description of the content
- be “frontloaded”, with a summary of the content at the start of the description
- not start with phrases such as “This page provides…”
- have a unique description that is specific to the content, which doesn’t repeat the title
- be no more than 160 characters including spaces (search engines ignore any text over this)

Titles

Titles appear in search results and should:

- accurately describe the statistics, using plain English
- include the geographical area and period covered by the content
- be unique
- use sentence case as this is easier to read, for example: “The adventure begins in earnest”

Words to Watch

Accept or Except	
“Accept” means to agree to receive or do. Example: I accept your terms.	“Except” means not including. Example: Bring everything except the tent.
Advice or Advise	
“Advice” means recommendations about what to do. Example: The advice was very useful.	Advise” means to recommend something. Example: I advised him to call the police.
Affect or Effect	
“Affect” means to influence or to adopt. Example: The war affected him greatly.	“Effect” means to accomplish the result of an action. Example: The overall effect was stunning.
Altogether or All Together	
“Altogether” means completely. Example: There were 6 altogether.	“All together” means everyone in one place. Example: We were all together in the living room.
Because, Due To and Since	
The words “due to” and “since” shouldn’t be used in place of “because”. “Owing to” can replace “because of” Example: It was wet inside owing to the window being open	
“Due to” can be used to mean either “owed to” or “scheduled to”. Example: The money that is due to her from an inheritance. The train is due to arrive at 8:45pm.	“Since” is usually used in the past tense. Examples: They have known each other since 1982. Mother and I haven’t spoken since Christmas. “Since” can be used in the present tense when it refers to the current situation.

	Example: Since he went to university, he thinks he knows everything
Between or Among	
Use "between" when referring to 2 subjects. Example: We divided the money between John and Michael	Use "among" when referring to more than 2 subjects. Don't use "amongst". Example: We shared the sweets among Sarah, Lucy and Clare
Complement or Compliment	
"Complement" is that which completes or fills up something. Example: A full complement of staff.	"Compliment" is an expression of admiration or praise. Example: He complimented my choice of outfit.
Complementary or Complimentary	
"Complementary" is completing or making up a whole. Example: The complementary staff.	"Complimentary" means given free of charge. Example: Here are the complimentary peanuts.
Dependent (noun) or Dependent (adjective)	
"Dependent" (noun) means someone who relies on another for support, financial or otherwise. Example: I have 6 dependents	"Dependent" (adjective) means depending, relying, contingent or relative. Example: The trip is dependent on the weather
Expenditure 'The act of spending' or 'money spent'. An item cannot have expenditure, it can only have money spent on it.	
Fewer or Less	
Use "less" with nouns that can't be counted or don't have a plural. Example: less praise less rain In sentences with "than", use "less" with numbers on their own: Example: The price fell from $18 to less than $12 Use "less" when referring to measurements or time: Example:	Use "fewer" with nouns in the plural. Example: fewer than 20 employees fewer people Don't use "over" and "under" for quantities. Use less than and fewer than, or more than. Example: More than 6%

Companies less than 5 years old are creating jobs. Per capita income is less than $50 per year. Heath Square is less than 4 miles away.	

Functionality

The capacity to be functional or practical; purpose. Also means ‘a specific application of a computer program’.

Hopefully

“Hopefully” means “full of hope”. Instead, use “it is hoped that” or “we hope”.

However

“However” has 2 meanings: “nevertheless” and “no matter how”.

If you use “however” at the beginning of a sentence to mean “nevertheless”, it must be followed by a comma. Example: The data are usually consistent. However, rounding can cause differences.	If you use “however” to mean “no matter how”, a comma is not required. Example: However many times I write this, it’s never easy. Don’t use “however” as a substitute for “but” Wrong example It’s raining today, however we hope it will be dry tomorrow.

Imply or Infer

“Imply” is to insinuate, signify or hint Example: The statistician implied the crime levels had gone down.	“Infer” is to draw a conclusion from something. Example: From the statistics we infer that the crime levels have gone down.

Important or Interesting

If something is important or interesting, you should also say why and to whom.

Example: The crime statistics are important to the police in each area, as they can use them for employment estimates.

License (noun) or License (verb)

“License” means being allowed or given leave. A patent or grant of permission. Example: The police asked to see my license.	“License” means to give permission or allow. Example: The venue is licensed for alcohol.

Like

Use “such as”, not “like”

Example: Stylistic devices such as bold and italic.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Mitigate

To appease, to make something more easily borne or to lessen the severity, violence or evil of something.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Principal or Principle</th></tr>
<tr><td>“Principal” means:

• Adjective = taking the first place.

• Noun = the head of a college or university.

Example:

The principal idea for school closure. The principal closed the school.</td><td>“Principle” means a law or premise.

Example:

The school was closed on principle.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Stationary or Stationery</th></tr>
<tr><td>“Stationary” means not moving

Example: The train was stationary.</td><td>“Stationery” means writing or office materials

Example: The pen is in the stationery cupboard.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">That or Which</th></tr>
<tr><td>“That” is used for part of a sentence that restricts another part.

Example:

The statistics that show the decline are invaluable.</td><td>“Which” is used for part of a sentence that doesn’t restrict another part.

Example:

The statistics, which were produced this week, show that there has been a decline.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">www, internet and online

“web”, “world wide web”, “www”, “internet” and “online” are always lower case. “Online” is always written as one word.

Examples:

web   world wide web   www   website   homepage   web page</td></tr>
</table>

Words to Avoid

Words to Avoid
Agenda (unless it’s for a meeting)
Advancing
Collaborate (use working with)
Combating
Commit/Pledge (be more specific – we’re either doing something or we’re not)
Countering
Deliver (pizzas, post and services are delivered – not abstract concepts like improvements or priorities)
Deploy (unless it’s military or software)
Dialogue (we speak to people)
Disincentives (and incentivize)
Empower
Facilitate (instead, say something specific about how you’re helping)
Focusing
Foster (unless it’s children)
Impact (don’t use this as a synonym for “have an effect on” or “influence”)
Initiate
Key (unless it unlocks something. A subject/thing isn’t key – it’s probably important
Land (as a verb only use if you’re talking about aircraft)
Leverage (unless in the financial sense)
Liaise
Overarching
Progress (as a verb – what are you actually doing?)
Promote (unless you’re talking about an ad campaign or some other marketing promotion
Robust
Slimming down (processes don’t diet)
Streamline

Words to Avoid
Strengthening (unless it's strengthening bridges or other structures)
Tackling (unless it's rugby, football or some other sport)
Transforming (what are you actually doing to change it?)
Utilize

Avoid using metaphors – they don't say what you actually mean and lead to slower comprehension of your content. For example:

- drive (you can only drive vehicles, not schemes or people)
- drive out (unless it's cattle)
- going forward (it's unlikely we are giving travel directions)
- in order to (superfluous - don't use it)
- one-stop shop (we are government, not a retail outlet)
- ring fencing

With all of these words you can generally replace them by breaking the term into what you're actually doing. Be open and specific.

Forms

Form Design

Principles

1. Minimize the pain
    a. No one likes filling in forms
    b. Smart defaults, inline validation, forgiving inputs
2. Illuminate a path to completion
3. Consider the context
    a. Familiar vs. foreign
    b. Frequently used vs. rarely used
4. Ensure consistent communication
    a. Errors, Help, Success
    b. Single voice despite many stakeholders

Patterns

- Repeatable design solutions to common problems
- Capture best practices that solve real user needs
- Between principles and guidelines
- A design vocabulary

Data Sources

- Usability Testing
    - Errors, issues, assists, completion rates, time spent per task, satisfaction scores
- Field Testing
    - Sources used, environment, context
- Customer Support
    - Top problems, number of incidents
- Web Conventions Survey
    - Common solutions, unique approaches
- Site Tracking
    - Completion rates, entry points, exit points, elements used, data entered
- Eye Tracking
    - Number of eye fixations, length of fixations, heat maps, scan paths

Information

- Layout
    - Label positioning
        - Best practices
            - For reduced completion times and familiar data input: top aligned
            - When vertical screen space is a constraint: right aligned
            - For unfamiliar or advanced data entry: left aligned
    - Content groupings
- Input Affordances
    - Formats, required fields

        - Required field indications are most useful when
            - There are lots of fields, but very few are required
            - Enables users to scan form to see what needs to be filled in
        - Option field indications are most useful when very few fields are optional
        - Neither Required or Optional fields are useful when all fields are required
    - Best Practice
        - Try to avoid optional fields
        - If most fields are required, indicate optional fields
        - If most fields are optional, indicate required fields
        - Text is best, but * often works for required fields
        - Associate indicators with labels
- Actions
    - Primary & Secondary
- Help & Tips
- Visual Hierarchy
- Acceptable attachment formats
    - How to attach

Best Practices

- Field lengths
    - Appropriate field lengths provide enough space for inputs
    - Random field lengths may add visual noise to a form
    - When possible, use field length as an affordance
    - Otherwise, consider a consistent length that provides enough room for inputs
- Content Grouping
    - Content relationships provide a structured way to organize a form
    - Groupings provide
        - A way to scan information required at a high level
        - A sense of how information within a form is related
    - Use relevant content groupings to organize forms
    - Use the minimum amount of visual elements necessary to communicate useful relationships
- Actions
    - Not all form actions are equal
        - Primary actions: directly responsible for form completion (Save, Continue & Submit)
        - Secondary actions: rarely need to be used, if at all (Reset, Cancel & Go Back)
    - The visual presentation of actions should match their importance
    - Avoid secondary actions if possible
    - If using secondary actions, ensure a clear visual distinction between primary and secondary actions
    - Align primary actions with input fields for a clear path to completion
- Help & Tips
    - Help & Tips are useful when:

        - Asking for unfamiliar data
        - Users may question why data is being requested
        - There are recommended ways of providing data
        - Certain data requests are optional
    - Be mindful that Help & Tips can quickly overwhelm a form if overused. In these cases, consider a dynamic solution:
        - Automatic inline exposure: help text appears automatically when the user click's in a form field
        - User activated inline exposure: user can opt to click a button (often a ? or "i") for help and tips
        - User activated section exposure
    - Minimize the amount of help and tips required to fill out a form
    - Help visible and adjacent to a data request is most useful
    - When lots of unfamiliar data is being requested, consider using a dynamic help system (i.e. automatic inline exposure or user activated exposure methods)
- Path to Completion
    - Primary goal for every form is completion
    - Every input requires consideration and action
    - Provide and illuminate a clear path to completion
    - Enable smart defaults
    - Flexible data entry: i.e. phone number format can include (), -, ., space or no space
    - For long forms, show progress and save
- Progressive Disclosure: provide additional options when appropriate for user
    - Expose options
    - Allow user to guide themselves to advanced options
- Feedback to User
    - Use inline validation for inputs that have potentially high error rates (i.e. appropriate password length/characters)
    - Communicate limits
- Errors
    - Clearly communicate an error has occurred: top placement, visual contrast
    - Provide actionable remedies to correct errors
    - Associate responsible fields with primary error message
    - "Double" the visual language where errors have occurred
- Progress
    - Provide feedback when an action is in progress (form submission, data calculations, uploads)
    - Disable "submit" button after user clicks it to avoid duplicate submissions
- Success
    - Confirm successful form completion via a message or animated indicator

Determining Online Document Format

Best practices for determining if a paper document will become an OpenCities Form, fillable PDF or Mobile App form.

OpenCities Forms

OpenCities forms are created in the Form Builder. Create basic forms to collect respondent input data based on questions you create. Data submitted using these forms can be recorded or distributed depending on the form's configured setting requirements. Existing sample forms in the Alpha microsite include:

- Offerings
  - Confirmation emails (submissions)
  - Signature links
- Alarm Permit Application
- Block Party Permit
- Business License Application
- EZ Pay Form
- Feedback
- PAYT sign up
- Pothole Damage Claim
- Open Water Account
- Parks and Rec Facility Rental
- Report a Pothole
- Report Graffiti or Vandalism
- Request a Service
- Sign up for Refuse Account
- Trash Cart Request

OpenForms features a drag and drop interface, smart logic and the ability for front-end users to save their progress in the form and email a link to themselves to finish later.

Consistency

- Consistent naming convention standard across all forms
  - *"Name of Form,*

Fillable PDF

Mobile App

Create a Mobile App form when soliciting reports from the public on public assets related to graffiti, potholes, streetlights/traffic signals and others.

Users submit a report including the following form fields:

- Location (optional map to drop pin to location, autopopulates the Location field)
- Photo upload
- Description box
- Checkbox to share the report with the public
- Optional Contact information (users are able to also submit the report anonymously – without filling out this information)

These fields are uniform across each report type:

- Graffiti
- Pothole
- Streetlight/Traffic Signal
- Other

If shared for the public to view, reports are viewable with tabs for the location (in a map and including the address; X,Y coordinates and latitude, longitude coordinates) and notes (including timestamps for the report status and method of submission). The issue description is included at the top of the report.

User Testing for Existing Fillable/Online Forms

1. Use the Form Builder to create basic forms. These are used to collect respondent input data received from questions created using various input field type options.

Testing for better conversions

Linking vs. Embedding

Linking

Linking to a hosted online form (one that doesn't reside on your website) is sometimes inevitable:

- You don't have access to your website
- Difficult to make changes

Test which works better, embedding your form on your website or linking to a form.

Logo

See the Administrative Policy for further logo use provisions. Logo use should not deviate from the standard logo versions.

Standard Logo Versions

There are just two versions of the logo that should be used - vertical and horizontal. Both must have the accompanied graphic text "CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS" as it is shown in these examples. The position and size of the text is not alterable, and must be scale up or down with the Calder graphic.

In all cases the color version of the logo should be utilized except where color limitations exist. For black and white prinitng, there is an official one color version that is to be utilized.

For printing on dark backgrounds a reversed out version exists and can be provided. (See below)

Different applications call for different formats. The city logo has been saved in several formats for convenience. Follow these guidelines as to which one to use:

Print applications:
AI, EPS, and TIFF (raster images) should be used

Web-based applications:
JPG, PNG (good for transparency, and GIF (good for animated effects)

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS text must be maintained as part of the city logo.

Color Guidelines

When sending the logo to outside agancies for printing, this color guide should be sent as well. This will keep the colors consistent across all printing processes.

Some instances it may be necessary to use a reversed out version of the one color logo. For example when it is printed white on black. In this case, the below example should be referenced. All other standards still apply.

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS

PANTONE YELLOW C
CMYK (0, 1, 100, 0)
RGB (247, 224, 23)

PANTONE 032 C
CMYK (0, 90, 60, 0)
RGB (237, 46, 56)

PANTONE YELLOW C
CMYK (100, 68, 0, 2)
RGB (0, 71, 186)

Reversed-Out Coloration

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS

BLACK

BLACK 30 %

BLACK

Clear Space

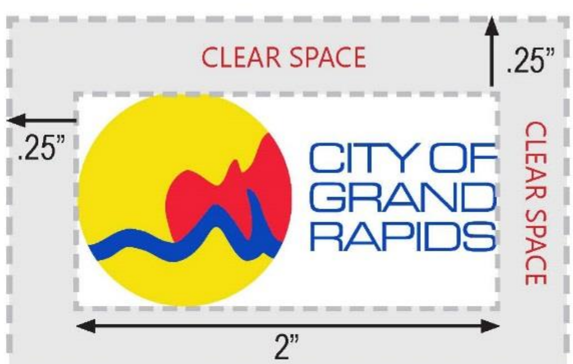
When designing with the logo it is important to maintain consistent clear space around the logo. The measurements shown illustrate the minimum space requirement.

The minimum amount of clear space is equal to 0.125 the height of the logo with the type. See examples at right for calculating.

These specifications are meant to viewed as relative proportions. It should be determined visually whether objects or type are placed too close to the logo element. Also, these measurements are for the MINIMUM space requirements. The clear space around the logo can be greater.

For the VERTICAL vesion of the city logo, the HEIGHT shall be used for the measurement equation.

HEIGHT = 3"
3 x .125 = .375
Minimum clear space for this usage = .375"



For the HORIZONRAL vesion of the city logo, the WIDTH shall be used for the measurement equation.

WIDTH =2 "
2 x .125 = .25"
Minimum clear space for this usage = ..25""

Minimum Size

To maintain readability of the tag line the log should be of a minimum size. The horizontal and vertical versions have their own respective size requirements.

For the horizontal version the width of the entire logo (Calder graphic and type) shall not be smaller than 7/8 inches wide. See example below.

The vertical version the width of the Calder graphic shall not be smaller than 1/2" wide. See the example to the right.

.5 inches (1/2")

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS

actual size

.875 inches (7/8")

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS

actual size

Incorrect uses

THese example illustrate just some of the incorrect uses of the city logo. Always use on of the two standard versions of the city logo as they are depicted in this style guide.

Things to remember:

Do not use Calder graphic without the accompanying type "CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS".

Do not alter the colors of the logo.

Do not skew or place in perspective the city logo.

Effects such as drop shadows or textures may not be used in the logo.

Placement of the "CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS" type is not to be altered.

Do not use older versions of the logo or cut and paste the logo from older documents. Use only the current logo in documents and online.

The logo must appear in whole. Clipping parts of the Calder graphic is not allowed.

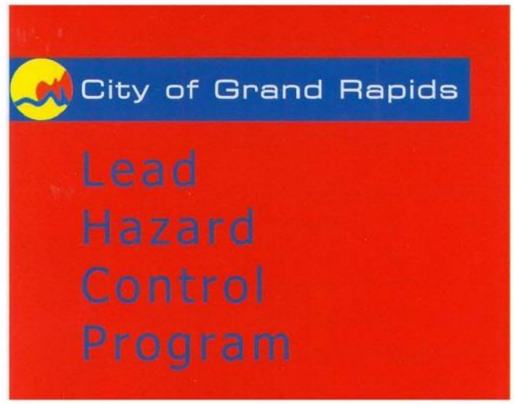
Incorrect uses (cont.)

Shown here are actual examples from around the city. In each case the logo was used incorrectly, by today's standards.

A. This example has the tagliine "CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS" incorrectly spelled out in one line and with lower case lettering. Also, the "CITY" lettering should not be printed in white.

B. The flyer show here is to illustrate the a flaw in the sizing of the logo. It is smaller than the minimum size that is allowed. It was printed at half the allowable of 1/2 inch wide.

D. The city business cards should be brought into compliance by including "CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS" with the Calder graphic.



Did you know?

Starting November 1, 2014 parking in or blocking a bike lane will be a ticketable offense in Grand Rapids, MI.

The City of Grand Rapids General Traffic Regulations Ordinance wa recently amended to better accommodate bicycles and improve safet within our community. Section 10.45 of Article 4 of the ordinance lis prohibited parking locations. A recent amendment adds two items t that list:

- *Within, or on a marked bike lane*
- *In any place or in any manner so as to block or partially block a bike lane*

These amendments recognize cycling as a supported mode c transportation in Grand Rapids. Please be mindful of these nev changes and be respectful of bicyclists, as they are legal road users.

This information presented by the City of Grand Rapids, in partnership with the Spoke Folks

Photography

Clear, communicative photography is essential to the City's branding and marketing efforts. Photography that accurately depicts the city and it its assets should be incorporated into all appropriate city communications. However, decisions to employ photography should always hinge on image quality. If the choice is to use a bad photograph or no photograph, choose the latter.

Guidelines

To ensure consistency across all organizational communications — both print and online — adhere to the following guidelines:

- Images used in widely-circulated promotional material (flyers, brochures, handouts, etc.) should be professionally photographed.
- Images of the public must be accompanied by signed waivers from all depicted individuals. • Images of people should depict the targeted audience
- All photographs appearing in print must be no less than 300 dpi at the desired scale
- Blurry, pixelated photographs are unacceptable in all cases
- Has photographic excellence been achieved? e.g. good color contrast, engaging subject matter, interesting use of light and a strong composition?
- Is the image clean and simple with a clear focal point? i.e. not busy, cluttered and complicated?

Data Visualization

Use of Visual Elements

Charts and interactive products

Use charts in bulletins to deliver a clear message visually. If a chart doesn't tell its own "story", consider whether it's really needed. Annotating a chart can help add context to the data and reduce the need for text elsewhere.

Use interactive charts and maps sparingly when they can bring an extra dimension to your data.

Tables

Tables can capture a great deal of data but often aren't the clearest or most transparent way of presenting the statistics or telling the story, such as a chart. If the user does want all of the data, they can download it. Only uses tables in your bulletin if there is a strong justification for doing so.

Chart size

The chart shouldn't feel separate from the report. Use the same font type and size for charts as the body font in the surrounding report.

Gridlines and Unit Intervals

Use gridlines sparingly. There should usually be between 4 and 8 gridlines per chart, depending on the size of the chart and the level of data. They should provide enough reference points to read the data values in the chart easily. Choose sensible gridline intervals, avoiding use of too many or too few gridlines.

Gridlines should always be grey: RGB value (190,190,190).

Gaps Between Bars

A standard bar chart should have gaps between bars that are slightly narrower than the bars. The exceptions to this are the exception of histograms and clustered bar charts.

A clustered bar chart should have gaps between the clusters that are slightly wider than a single bar.

Borders and Backgrounds

Don't use borders and backgrounds for charts.

Number of lines per chart

The maximum number of lines plotted on a chart depends on how similar or different the data are and what you want to highlight.

You need to make sure that each line is easily distinguished from the others.

Small multiples solution

Use small multiples if it is difficult to distinguish between the plot lines of 4 or more similar data sets. Use the same scale for all charts when comparing 2 or more data series.

A singular time series of interest can also be highlighted, with all other data sets toned down.

Slope chart solution

Use a slope chart to highlight changes between selected years. The granularity of the data is not evident; however, trends are easily noticed.

Legends or Keys

A legend or key shouldn't be used, instead label the data directly. If a legend or key is necessary, place it on the chart as close as possible to the data. The order and orientation of the legend or key should be the same as the data.

Long Category Names

Use a horizontal bar chart rather than a vertical bar chart if your data has long category names.

Subcategories

If the subcategories are not the same in all of the main categories, label the main categories and subcategories directly on the y-axis.

3D and Other Chart Effects

Don't use 3D when creating charts. The false perspective will distort the data. For example, categories A and B seem equal when plotted in 3D. However, category B is noticeably larger, as shown when plotted in 2D.

Comparing data sets – shared horizons

Start data that are likely to be compared from the same point on a chart – a shared horizon. Use a clustered chart to compare values; only the first category is easily comparable in stacked bar charts.

Ranking

To show:

- greater than
- less than
- equal to
- from lowest to highest

Ranking Charts

Use bar charts to show data that are ranked, in either ascending or descending order. Horizontal bars should be used.

A bar chart should always be ranked by value, unless there is a natural order to the data (for example, age or time).

Distribution

To show:

- frequency
- distribution
- profile
- range
- concentration
- normal curve
- population pyramid
- shape

For 1 variable

Use a histogram to show a distribution of data. Use small gaps between the bars to emphasize the profile of the data.

For 2 variables

Use a population pyramid to show the distribution of comparable data sets and highlight differences in the profile of the data.

For more than 2 variables

To compare 4 variables population pyramids can be overlaid, with the least important data set displayed using an outline pyramid instead of bars.

Correlation

Correlation charts are often associated with causality and they should be used with caution.

Correlation can show:

- increases with
- relates to
- changes with
- varies with

- caused by

Labelling Values in a Chart

Bar charts shouldn't need data value labels. If you need data value labels, create a chart−table combination.

Chart labels

Chart text must be horizontal. If the labels won't fit into the required space, transpose the chart or convert the units.

Using Color in Bar Charts

Categorical data in bar charts

For categorical data that can't be organized into broad groups use the same color and shade.

If the categorical data can be grouped use color to help highlight this relationship.

Color by Broad Category

Use color when sub-categories are not shared across broad categories to show hierarchy in the data

Color by Year

Use color when sub-categories are common across broad categories to show secondary relationships in the data.

Using Color in Line Charts

Use color to distinguish between lines on a line chart. If the data has an implied order, for example age ranges, use different shades of 1 color, or colors with different luminance values, but the same hue and saturation.

If the data has no implied order, for example male and female, different colors (hues) can be used.

Lines have a smaller area than bars, which means fewer colors can be distinguished. Try to avoid using more than 4 shades of 1 color on a line chart without using another mechanism to differentiate between them. Using color and texture can be particularly powerful.

Using Color in Pie Charts

Different shades of 1 color, or colors with different luminance values, or different colors (hues) can be used in pie charts.

Using Color to Connect Information

You can also use color to connect information and charts on a page or within an article.

Using red and green

If you're using red to signal "warning," or "caution," and green to signal "approval" or "correctness" consider adding a symbol to make sure color-blind users can still understand the message.

Creating Website Content (Templates)

The links below are organized to guide you through the processes of developing web content.

Content Type Templates

Hierarchy of templates per type: Site Template, Group Template, Content Type Template

Customization

How to customize templates per type: Content Type, Group Templates and Site Templates.

Document Library Overview

Reviews what a document library consists of and how fields from the admin screen are mapped (placed) onto the website.

Creating a Document Library Listing

Directions for how to create a document library listing.

Elected Officials Module

Overview of the module's functionality. Includes listings for each elected official and a detail page for each.

Event Templates

Content formatting and size specifications for the **Default** and **With Full Width Image** templates

Form Preview

Demonstrates the preview available prior to publishing a form.

Creating a General Page

Explains the purpose and location of general pages. Also includes methods for communicating general page information.

General Page Templates

Instructions for displaying content on general pages. Includes field descriptions available for use on these pages.

Homepage Tabs

Default tabs available at the top of the homepage. Instructions for adding additional tabs

Image Gallery Templates

How to share the image gallery content with a different display type.

Venue Templates

Content formatting and size specifications for the **Default** and **With Full Width Image** templates.

Works and Projects Templates

Content formatting and size specifications for the **Default** and **Full Width** templates.

Community Engagement Templates

Content formatting and size specifications for the following templates:

- Consultation – Default
- Consultation – Full width image
- Discussion – Default
- Blog – Default
- Blog – Full width image
- Blog – Full width

Creating Content in a Sub Site

How to create content (content types available for creating the main site structure and other content types for specific elements on the site), sharing content and listings.

Creating Email/Message Templates For Forms

Configuring emails from forms and creating Autoresponse messages

Create Email Templates for Workflows

System email templates and workflow notification email templates

Creating Iframes for Use in Body Content

Iframe description and how to create and insert an iframe

Creating an RSS Feed

RSS Feed description and how to create one

Landing Page Templates

Specifications and formatting for the 4 template options to display child page information.

News Templates

Content formatting and size specifications for the **Default**, **Full Width** and **With Full Width Image** templates.

Creating a News Page

Where to find News Pages, how to create a news article, field descriptions and a tutorial

Parks Templates

Content formatting and size specifications for the **Default** and **With Full Width Image** templates.

Creating a Landing Page

How to create a landing page, field descriptions and selecting a landing page template